

SUSAN M. COLLINS
MAINE

413 DIRKSEN SENATE OFFICE BUILDING
WASHINGTON, DC 20510-1904
(202) 224-2523
(202) 224-2693 (FAX)

United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510-1904

June 7, 2010

COMMITTEES:
HOMELAND SECURITY AND
GOVERNMENTAL AFFAIRS,
RANKING MEMBER
APPROPRIATIONS
ARMED SERVICES
SPECIAL COMMITTEE
ON AGING

The Honorable Julius Genachowski
Chairman
Federal Communications Commission
445 12th Street, SW
Washington, DC 20554

CB
ADA
10/10

Dear Chairman Genachowski:

I am writing to ask the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) to consider carefully the compensation rates for the Interstate Telecommunications Relay Service (TRS) Fund. The Video Relay Service (VRS) program has a significant impact on Americans living with hearing disabilities. VRS provides deaf Americans communications options by allowing them to connect with hearing individuals in real-time through a professional American Sign Language interpreter via a videophone and a high-speed internet connection.

The FCC is currently considering the rate change submitted by the National Exchange Carrier Association (NECA). I ask the FCC to carefully weigh these public comments, the importance of the VRS program, and the need to effectively pair compensation to costs associated with providing this service.

I also ask the FCC to work to improve the oversight, and management of the VRS program to ensure the effective use of this fund. I am concerned about the allegations of fraudulent claims being made to the TRS fund last year. Eliminating fraud and abuse of the reimbursement fund should be a priority for the FCC.

I hope that the FCC will set a fair compensation rate that will keep VRS service available to deaf Americans.

Sincerely,



Susan M. Collins
United States Senator



PRINTED ON RECYCLED PAPER

16 JUN 2010 RCUD



FEDERAL COMMUNICATIONS COMMISSION
WASHINGTON

OFFICE OF
THE CHAIRMAN

August 5, 2010

The Honorable Susan M. Collins
Unites States Senate
413 Dirksen Senate Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20510

Dear Senator Collins:

Thank you for your letter regarding the reimbursement rate for Video Relay Service (VRS). I share your support for VRS, which has become a critical communications tool for many who are deaf or hard of hearing.

On June 28, 2010, the Commission unanimously adopted two items to address immediate and long-term approaches for sustaining the vital Telecommunications Relay Services, of which VRS is one form. In an *Order*, the Commission sets interim VRS rates for the July 1, 2010 – June 30, 2011 period at \$6.2390 for Tier I, \$6.2335 for Tier II, and \$5.0668 for Tier III. These rates represent the average of the current tiered rates and NECA's proposed rates based on actual, historical costs. The *Order* notes that these rates also reflect a balance between the goal of ensuring that VRS providers recover from the VRS Fund only the reasonable costs caused by their provision of VRS and the goal of ensuring quality and sufficient service during a one-year period.

The other item adopted on June 28 is a *Notice of Inquiry* to take a fresh look at the VRS rules with an eye to ensuring that this vital program remains effective, efficient, and sustainable in the future. The *Notice* poses questions that delve into many cost and reimbursement related issues, seeking to make the program less susceptible to the waste, fraud, and abuse that have plagued the current program. Bringing clarity and predictability to VRS compensation is high on the Commission's list of priorities, and we will resolve this proceeding as expeditiously as possible. I am enclosing a copy of the Commission's News Release for your information.

I appreciate your continuing interest in this very important matter. Please let me know if I can be of any further assistance.

Sincerely,



Julius Genachowski